



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### ***Governor Hoeven Proclaims Birth Defects Prevention Month in North Dakota Event Focuses on Addressing Diabetes Among Women of Childbearing Age***

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. John Hoeven has proclaimed January 2010 as *Birth Defects Prevention Month* in North Dakota. To highlight ways to prevent birth defects, the North Dakota Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network to alert women of childbearing age about the critical link between diabetes and an increased risk for birth defects, according to Devaiah Muccatira with the department's Division of Children's Special Health Services.

"All types of diabetes, not just gestational, have been linked to birth defects when the disease is not carefully controlled," Muccatira said. "Although diabetes has been identified as a public health concern, most people are unaware of the complications that uncontrolled diabetes can create for both the pregnant woman and her baby."

The prevalence of diabetes in women of childbearing age has doubled in the last decade, affecting 1.3 million women nationwide. From 2006 through 2008, 7.5 women per 1,000 women who gave birth had preexisting diabetes. In addition, the rate of North Dakota mothers who had gestational diabetes was 34 per 1,000 births.

Studies have demonstrated that the key to a healthy pregnancy for women with diabetes is keeping blood glucose in target range – both before and during pregnancy. Babies born to women with diabetes, especially women with poor diabetes control, are at greater risk for birth defects.

"Small steps like visiting a health-care provider before and during pregnancy, taking a multivitamin with folic acid every day, and reaching a healthy weight can make a big difference in preventing birth defects," Muccatira said.

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For more information about *Birth Defects Prevention Month*, contact Devaiah Muccatira, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4963 or [dmuccatira@nd.gov](mailto:dmuccatira@nd.gov).

PROCLAMATION  
**BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH**  
JANUARY 2010

**WHEREAS**, birth defects can occur in any family, regardless of the parents' race, health history, economic status or education; and

**WHEREAS**, birth defects affect one in every 33 babies in the United States and are a leading cause of death; in North Dakota, about one in every five infant deaths are the result of birth defects; and

**WHEREAS**, early identification of a child with a birth defect and early intervention services typically improve the child's quality of life, and may even save his or her life; and

**WHEREAS**, the chance for all types of birth defects, and especially of multiple birth defects, increases when a mother has type 1 or type 2 diabetes, and

**WHEREAS**, women who have gestational diabetes are at greater risk for complications, including high blood pressure and preeclampsia during pregnancy, as well as labor and delivery complications; and

**WHEREAS**, women are encouraged to take a multivitamin with folic acid during pregnancy to prevent serious defects of the brain and spinal cord, and to reach a healthy weight during pregnancy to help ensure healthy mothers and babies.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, as the Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim January 2010, BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH in the state of North Dakota.

John Hoeven  
Governor

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